1: Hoebel E-5 (1933) 1940 NO6 Comanche NO6

WAR CHIEFS

624 Although the Comanche did not attain such a clear differentiation of function and status of the war chiefs as was the case in the more advanced plains tribes, yet the influence of those tribes upon Comanche life is marked in the complex of patterns pertaining to Comanche war chiefs. The study of the Comanche was made too late to learn all one would like to know about the way of the Comanche war bonnet wearer. The information of present day Indians on this point is often vague and confusing. The use of specific [184] types of war bonnets was not a cultural universal throughout the Comanche tribe. There are indications of notable band differences.

624 565 The wearer of the full-feathered war bonnet was a person of special status in the tribe. Although not organized into an association, the wearers of the full-feathered war bonnet formed a special class. They were known individually as tɛ́kniwʌp.[9] A man joined the tɛ́kniwʌp class and was privileged to wear the bonnet by accumulation of sufficient coups, by bestowal of the bonnet as a challenge by the women, or by recovering a bonnet discarded by its owner in flight. These methods will be described.

624 The first road to war chief status is best described in the tale recorded from That's It. (Quotation marks in this and subsequent cases indicate actual transcription of informant's statement.)

Case 1. The Making of a War Chief
Informant: That's It

"The youngest brother wanted to go to war. He was a strong young man, maybe sixteen years old. It was time, he thought, to show his worth to the people.

"He went to his father, telling him of the feeling he had, saying that he wanted to go with the fighters on the raid. His father was glad that his son had such thoughts. 'It is good,' he said. 'And furthermore, my son, I will give you a powerful pony with which to meet our enemies. You shall have a good mule to ride upon the trail, for you must respect your pony. He must be ridden only in battle. Ride upon the mule and lead the pony by its halter until the proper time. When you get to the territory of our enemies it will be time. Leave your mule and get on that pony. Ride him hard like you were meeting the enemy. Do this a short way and stop. Rest! Charge again. Rest once more. Do this four times, my son. Do this, and you will have a pony which will never tire. It will be a famous war pony among the people.'

[789]

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[197] [9] The word tɛ́kniwʌp, which in Comanche has come to mean "war leader," is derived from the Shoshone term for peace chief, tɛ́gwɔni. Literally translated in Shoshone this means, "good talk thrown out to the people." The Shoshonean war chief is called naǥedink tɛ́gwɔni, "in war, good talk thrown out to the people." The Comanche peace chief term, pánaǥo, it will be remembered, has no generic meaning in the Comanche language.

1: Hoebel E-5 (1933) 1940 NO6 Comanche NO6

absence. The Comanches knew the conditional curse for adultery and sorcery cases, and also had ordeal. They made no legal use of the latter; the former was not extended into general legal practice. This is more notable than the *absence* of either procedure. Nothing could more interestingly evidence the inertia in the way of diffusion or further adaptation of institutions *within* a single culture.

Papítsɔin may be best called a joking ordeal. In the presence of others a joker (who could be anybody so long as his relationship to the butt of the joke did not demand avoidance) addressed another person of either sex. In an off-hand manner the remark would be dropped, "Well, and so I hear you have been having intercourse with So-and-so."

The usual reaction was indignant denial. If so, the joker picked up a bit of dirt between the fore-fingers and sprinkled it on the hair of his victim. This done, were the victim guilty of the sex conduct charged, the loss of all hair was supposed to result, and the victim would appear ridiculous in the eyes of all people. Or even more terrifying, if the jokester placed the dirt upon the tongue of the victim, guilt would be proved in loss of speech.

This is a practice which lives today and causes much mirth for the onlookers and terror for the party accused. In the summer of 1933 Skinny And Wrinkled told with great gusto how he had seen a woman running down the main streets of Lawton, Oklahoma, speeding as though pursued by the Holy Terror, which was in fact no more than a laughing young Indian with a pinch of dust between his fingers.

Non-submission to the test proves guilt even as does submission and the occurrence of the unfortunate consequences. This is ordeal in all its aspects of a supernatural test save the solemn setting and the presence of a dispute of interest-importance to the disputants. One would expect that in the event the victim of the joke were a married woman, and found guilty, her husband would perforce institute proceedings against the adulterer. Nevertheless, the assurance of informants is that it was never used seriously, a statement which is substantiated by the complete absence of any ordeal practices in the case histories of disputes which were collected.[11]

OATH

In the Buffalo Tongue Ceremony,[12] a very definite immunity from legal consequences for an unfaithful wife was observed. After a big hunt the

[11] The joking ordeal was unknown to the Shoshone. Its counterpart was found among the Cheyennes. This indicates a late acquisition for the Comanches.

[12] This ceremony is lifted from the sun-dance complex of other tribes. Its rarity among the Comanches is attested by the fact that no mention of its practice was made by informants used by the laboratory group. Dr. Mirsky recorded it independently.

The Comanches

757 The vapor bath or sweat lodge was used extensively in medical treatment as in the cure of Breaks Something.

784 Beyond curing and lending their protective power to others, the Comanche medicine men served to make rain and as seers. The rain-making medicine of Big Bear called for the use of an outside tail feather of a black eagle. With his power it was necessary only to dip the feather into water and sprinkle towards the sun four times. "A cloud will soon appear and shortly it will rain." Big Bear overdid it once when living in a tipi northeast of Cache, Oklahoma. He made medicine for a rain with some wind in it. Came a cloud. It grew bigger. Then came rain and a big wind that blew his tipi down. "His wife got after him for not asking for a nice, soft rain."[16]

787 A seer might be called upon to learn the fate of overdue war parties. In one simple method the medicine man "dreamed" on it and gave the answer in the morning. The other method was a regular séance. Post Oak Jim's account of such a séance is as follows.

« « « A war party was gone for a long time; they wanted to find out about it.

The medicine man had them clean up a nice place on the ground for a special tipi west of the camp. He selected about seven special men to go in with him. The camp was ordered to remain quiet. He had a fire built, and they went in just before midnight. They smoked and told the medicine man what they wanted to know.

He told them to put out the fire and close the smoke vent from outside.

Then he put on his blanket and went out into the night. He made a call. From way off an answer came back. He called again; the answering call was closer. He called a third time; it was closer yet. On his fourth call the answer was near by.

Then he re-entered the tipi and sat down.

"Everyone remain quiet," he told them. "The ghost is coming. That was his call."

The ghost, in the form of a bird, lit on top of the tipi. They could hear it was heavy.

From inside the tipi, the medicine man talked to it. "What we

[16] Informant: Slope.

5: Carlson & Jones E, N-4, 5 (1933)1939
NO6 Comanche NO6

824 type generally affected by members of the Peyote cult among all
276 Oklahoma tribes," and he also mentions (p. 163) obtaining a necklace
796 of mescal beans from the Iowa, but he does not connect either of these with the peyote ceremony. Schultes (21, p. 141) states that a
[789 841] Kiowa peyote leader wore mescal beans on the lower part of his leggings "as a safeguard against stepping on menstrual blood," and La Barre (12, p. 45) observed mescal beans worn on Kiowa peyote moccasins for the same purpose. La Barre (12, p. 106) indicates an
[301] unpublished manuscript by Mooney as his source for the statement that the Comanche used to get mescal beans from near Fort Stanton (New Mexico), but apparently only for ornamental purposes.

783 824 Our informants stated that in ceremonies the leaves of the red cedar or juniper (*Juniperus virginiana*) were placed on the fire and the smoke inhaled for purification. Throughout the Plains the red cedar is associated with ceremonies and particularly with purification. La Barre (12, pp. 45–53) mentions several instances of the participation of a "Cedar-man" in the Kiowa–Comanche type of peyote rites. The duties of this individual seem to be to sprinkle "dried and rubbed cedar" on the fire, and at certain stages the members purify themselves in the smoke from this incense. Schultes (21, p. 139) describes the typical manner of use of the cedar incense in peyote ceremonies.

824 352 171 The Comanche brought great quantities of wormwood or "sage" (*Artemisia filifolia*) into the tipi for use as cushions. There is a strong suggestion that they did this in the ceremonial tipi especially, where "sage" (*Artemisia spp.*) was commonly employed as floor covering and cushions. La Barre (12, p. 45) mentions the spreading of sagebrush in the tipi for seats in the Kiowa–Comanche type of peyote ceremony and the resting of the "father peyote" on sprigs of sage (pp. 46–47). Opler (18, pp. 277, 279) says that the Carrizo and the Lipan Apache also strewed it on the floor and describes the placing of the "chief peyote" on it, for the peyote is considered to be friendly to no plant but this. Schultes (21, pp. 139–140) describes approximately the same uses of sage (the species *Artemisia vulgaris*) in the tipi, mentions the chewing of a few leaves of it before eating peyote, and also its place in the sweat lodge.

824 343 Two other plants used by the Comanche in the sweat lodge are the skunkbush (*Rhus trilobata*) and little bluestem grass (*Andropogon scoparius*). The bark of the former was placed in hot water and the

6: Linton E-5 (1933) 1935 NO6 Comanche NO6

time. Each time they shrugged and stamped they blew a short blast on the eagle bone whistle. When certain special songs were sung all the spectators would join in, rise and dance too to encourage them. The medicine man stayed behind the screen most of the time, but when the dancers seemed to be flagging he would come out and reinvigorate them. He would do this by taking his fan, made of the tail feathers of the road-runner, and, while holding it horizontal, sweep it around in a circle from left to right. As he swept it around he blew along it and each dancer, as it came in line with him, began to dance hard again.

From time to time, apparently whenever interest was flagging, one of the spectators would come forward and hang a gift of some sort on the center pole. While doing so he would pray for a long and happy life. Small boys were encouraged to shoot arrows into the fork of the pole as their offerings. These offerings were sacred and could not be touched. When the people went away at the end of the dance the things were simply left there to be destroyed by the elements. However, visitors from other tribes who happened to be present during the dance could put an offering on the pole and take down something else in exchange. One informant, when a small boy, had visited a Kiowa Sun Dance lodge after the dance and had, on the advice of his grandfather, exchanged his old breech clout for a new one hanging on the pole. When they got back to camp their own people said that this was dishonest.

According to Post Oak Jim, the informant mentioned above, the medicine man in charge might come out from time to time and do sleight of hand tricks to show his power. He might put a knife down his throat and bring it up covered with blood. Then he would blow on the blade and the blood would disappear. Sick people might also call on the medicine man for special help during the dance, although whether he treated them on the spot was not ascertained. No other informants mentioned these features, but healing is such a frequent element in Comanche ceremonies that they may well have taken it for granted. All the spectators were believed to benefit by the ceremony and to go away improved in health and spirits.

On the first day the dance ran from early in the afternoon until sunset. There was then a halt of about two hours to rest and eat, after which the dance began again and continued until midnight. After the evening session had ended, the dancers went down to the creek under guard of a man chosen by the medicine man and bathed. They sat and splashed in the water but were forbidden to dive in or to drink. They then returned and slept behind the screen on the beds prepared for them. They danced the next morning, afternoon, and evening, with intervals at noon and night for them to rest

10:Horn T-3 (1836-1837) 1955
NO6 Comanche NO6

them to, with a kind of stoic indifference. But they are not slow to profit by the labor of others beside themselves, whenever an opportunity offers; and it is truly astonishing to witness the pains and labor they will go through to obtain one; and when they have marked their victim, it would seem that nothing short of an interposing miracle of mercy could save him. They literally live by slaying and murdering all of man and beast that come in their way. There are [55] exceptions in the case of the traders who go among them, and who have learned to anticipate their wants, and to supply them; but woe to the unwary trader that offends them! He seldom, if ever, fails to pay the forfeit with his life. They are trained, from infancy to age, to deeds of cruelty and bloodshed, and are as wholly wreckless of human rights, out of their own circle, as though they held in their own hands the destinies of the universe; and they appear to be alike insensible of obligation to any being in heaven or on earth. I could not, from all the observation of which I was capable, discover that they had any idea of a Supreme Being; nor could I learn that they paid their devotion to any kind of being, unless something of the kind might be obscurely inferred from the following circumstance: In a storm, with thunder and lightning, I have frequently seen them go out and throw dirt into the air, and utter unintelligible sounds; but whether it was designed to express their resentment to, or

10:Horn T-3 (1836-1837) 1955
NO6 Comanche NO6

conciliate the favor of, the Author of the war of elements, I could not determine. Another circumstance induced me to think they might have some notions of a future state. There was a young woman among them, who certainly possessed some traits of character more amiable by far than the most of her race with whom I was acquainted; she sickened and died, when their grief, as usual, was unbounded. I observed to one of the females, that I hoped she was better off than when here; – she smiled, and pointed upwards. The strength of their attachment to each other, and the demonstration they give of the same, even to the dividing of the last morsel with each other upon the point of starvation, might put many professed christians to the blush! But they are just the reverse of all this to all the world beside. They think themselves the cleverest race of men on earth, and treat all others as infinitely inferior to themselves. They have no formal marriages among them. They generally take wives at an early age. Each man is allowed to take five women; but, in making his selection, the ties of consanguinity oppose no barrier; hence they are truly a consanguineous race of so motley a mixture, that it would be impossible to identify the connexions. The distinction, however, [56] might be less obscure, but for the fact, that with them matrimonial alliances oppose no restraint to promiscuous intercourse. The relation of the women to the men differs little from a state of the

21: Burnet T-5 (1818-1819) 1954 NO6 Comanche NO6
Texas

175 [ca. 1818]
754 perament of the climate they inhabit, would seem to pre-
clude the existence of consumptive diseases amongst them.
175 They have faith in certain preternatural charms, and think,
or affect to think, the oil of the beaver rubbed on the surface
789 of the body, an impenetrable barrier to a ball; and will relate
[237] with infinite self-complacency, how the Goch-chupin's
(Spaniards) balls, have hit them here and there, and fallen
harmless to the ground. This idea may possibly have some
operation and impart a factitious boldness to their minds,
when opposed to the *Scopete* or Spanish musket; but few
will be found of sufficient hardihood to repose confidence
in their magical shields, when assailed by the ball of a rifle.
They have an indescribable dread of that potent and un-
175 erring weapon. They sometimes wear around the neck,
751 one or more highly aromatic kernels, resembling the Vanilla
bean, which they esteem as amulets of infallible efficacy in
preventing disease; and they indulge many other and more
frivolous whimsicalities that are not worthy of notice in a
description so cursory as this.

175 The Comanchees admit of polygamy to an unlimited
595 extent, and have no fixed ceremonials of marriage. Their
[585] principal warriors have often from five to eight or ten
wives, being restrained only by their own capricious hu-
mours. Carno-san-tua, (The Son of America), a chief of
some note, left 10 widows to bewail his untimely death.
[68] The most comely of them, however, were soon dispersed,
to herd with the connubial slaves of other Lords of the
creation; while the less favoured retained their weeds, and
prolonged their severe and sanguinary discipline of lamen-
tation for the dead. The redoubtable warrior generally pro-
portions the number of his help-mates to his means of main-
tenance, which implies simply animal sustentation, and in
procuring which, his only agency is the killing of game.
175 His wives, one or more of whom are always in attendance
593 on his hunting excursions, perform the duties of ostler in
462 catching, saddling, and turning out his horse; of page, in
carrying his implements of the chase; of butcher and porter,
in skinning and transporting his meat; and of cook and
000 waiter, in preparing and serving it up. The Squaws are

29: Hoebel E-4,5 (1933) 1969 NO6 Comanche NO6

682 It was an absolute privilege-right, which not even her family would move [593] to challenge.

On the other hand, for one Comanche male to kill another was never 682 a privilege-right, even when applying force to an over-stubborn defendant. 627 Any willful killing required a revenge killing of the slayer. Here was the *fatal weakness* of Comanche law, as indeed of so much primitive law. The culture provided right ways of procedure and defined the substance of 602 tortious acts. But the primacy of the kin group came to the fore whenever 682 a prosecutor felt he had pushed negotiation as far as it would carry and then had taken recourse to arms. The kin of the defendant whom he had 627 killed did not accept the killing, although general public opinion may have held that the victim had it coming to him. The Comanche kinsmen took revenge on the prosecutor regardless of the rightness of his original grievance. In enforcing the law he lost his life, a victim of *lex talionis*.

However much Comanche law fell short in this respect, custom [578] remedied the defect in another. Blood-revenge killing was only of the first killer and retaliation did not lead to feud. The kinship principle, while extant, was nevertheless weak among the Comanches, and general fighting within the tribe was not to be countenanced when there were always outside enemies to be confronted. The killer, and the killer alone, had to die. There it stopped. No religious sanction, no tribal authority, was necessary to suppress the feuding tendency. Custom was sufficient restraint, and in this the Comanches were fortunate, for thereby they escaped the self-renewing curse that plagues so many primitive law systems.

Willful killing of a man's favorite horse was an act akin to murder, 685 especially if the horse had been bequeathed to him by a best friend. Re- 627 taliation was taken not in killing the favorite horse of the transgressor but [825] in slaying the transgressor himself. A favorite horse had a legal personality and was equated with a human being. Consequently, no further blood revenge followed, for things were already equal: a man for a horse.

Every Comanche male at one time or another went on a vision quest 781 in search of power. He did not abase himself before the supernatural spirits or masochistically mutilate and torture himself to arouse their compassion. 776 Nor did he weep before them to arouse their pity. Unlike the tribesmen 789 of the Plains to the north, he assumed that the spirits were generally benign toward him; they needed no coaxing to share the benefits of their power with him. If he fasted and waited in a lonely place, they would help him. 776 Nor did they interfere in his daily living except as they put conditions on the use of the power they gave him. A Comanche had to observe no super- 784 natural tabus save those that went with his own personal medicine. Under 756 Postulate VIII[A] most Comanche medicine men used their powers to help 789 the people. They cured and used their medicine to bring success in war and the hunt. They even, for a contractual consideration, helped others

A [See category 181, p. 69--Analyst]

29: Hoebel E-4,5 (1933) 1969 N06 Comanche N06

to get a share in their power. Although they were paid for their healing efforts, they did not attempt to milk the public or use their supernatural potency for exploitative purposes. Comanche magic was mostly white.

Occasional older medicine men, however, became "mean medicine men." Unable any longer to maintain their prestige by war prowess, they struck out at enterprising youngsters. They shot their medicine into them. The detection of sorcery was the job of a curing medicine man. In the first instance, after diagnosing the nature of the illness and who caused it, he always tried to effect a cure with a counter medicine. If he was successful, nothing more was done. If he failed, legal action was in order. The brothers of the sorcerized victim would call upon the sorcerer to remove the curse. If he refused, which he usually did by denying that he had anything to do with the affair, they could move to an attack with weapons or the threat of such an attack. But whether they did or not depended upon their strength of character. In sorcery cases where the aggrieved party was a weakling (and apparently not backed by brothers) there was no prosecution; and one Comanche, Salt Worn Out, even shifted to another band, to get out of the sorcerer's sphere of influence.[7] In one instance where the aggrieved brothers started an apparently forceful prosecution, they backed down when the sorcerer put up an even more forceful defense—a threat of *more* sorcery.[8] In the event both parties took equally strong positions, one accused sorcerer took a voluntary conditional curse on the sun—and was killed by lightning the following spring. Thus he paid the price of his guilt.[9]

In another instance the alleged sorcerer was forthwith stabbed and killed by his own sister's son, the brother of his victim. The slayer's elder brother was appalled by the act. But Chew Up, the knife wielder, retorted, "Is it as nothing that I should sit and watch my brother being murdered? Should I have done nothing?" And here there was no blood revenge in counteraction, "Because" in the very words of a Comanche, "the quarrel was in the family, no one else could take it up or do anything about it."[10] Homicide was not legally a tribal or public affair.

The cases in general indicate that the Comanches preferred not to tangle with sorcerers. A cure by a good doctor was much to be preferred. This failing, a kinsman did not have to prosecute as did a cuckolded husband, but he legitimately could, if he had the guts. Otherwise the individual act of sorcery went unpunished. Brave warriors as champions at law did not enter these cases. A warrior outfacing another warrior was one thing, but to have to threaten a sorcerer was not an inviting prospect for even the bravest.

[7] Hoebel, *Political Organization and Law-ways*, case 25, p. 92.
[8] *Ibid.*, case 24, p. 91.
[9] *Ibid.*, case 23, pp. 89–90.
[10] *Ibid.*, case 27, pp. 94–95.

30: Levy E-S (ca. 1957) 1958 NO6 Comanche NO6
Oklahoma
Kiowa NQ15

/page 39 continued/

get. In the days before the first World War there were many special peyote meetings from which the young men were barred. In these meetings power contests were held, almost as a form of sport. The miraculous was common place, miracles, healing and the forseeing of the future. But this strong power of peyote, like that found on the quest, has almost completely dissappeared. The power possessed by the older men had to be handed down, and the communal power of peyote depended upon strong faith. Not only has the continuity of the power broken down but the power of peyote which does not depend upon teaching has also weakened considerably. Moreover, the younger people do not take the religion very seriously. I have posed the question of whether the increasing concern with power and faith which comes with old age does not offset this trend considerably. My informants answers are instructive.

In the traditional Comanche culture the young men were concerned only with war power and only rarely with healing and wisdom. But they did not deny the validity of the power which naturally came to the aged. When an older man felt that a younger one was ready to learn his power that honour was almost invariably accepted. But in the period from 1900 through 1920 the young men were not only frustrated but were also con-/40/fronted with the White system which seemed more powerful. As a result they went through a period of not believing in the traditional forms of power. They refused to learn when the old men offered to teach and the old men often refused to teach before they died because they distrusted the ways of the younger generation. In spite of the fact that this generation changed as it reached middle age, and came to value the traditional culture and to believe in the old forms of power, the chain had been broken and there was no way to retrieve what had been broken and there was no way to retrieve what had been lost in youth. Many became more serious about Peyote but this was never enough to regain the power and faith of the past.

31: Jones E-5 (1967-1970) 1972 NO6 Comanche NO6
Oklahoma

175 man, if he was fortunate, could become a peace chief, but a peace chief possessed
178 no real authority and functioned most importantly as a mediator in the disputes
624 which arose among the younger men.

With the greater food supply offered by the seemingly boundless bison
175 herds, hunting magic decreased in importance. Antelope magic did persist from
178 the Shoshone heritage. The more favorable living conditions and constant food
224 supply also allowed the individual bands, which had retained their Basin character-
[789] istics, to become larger and to achieve a greater degree of independence from their
621 sister bands. The emphasis on the buffalo as a food source also tended to decrease
[222] the importance of gathering and exploitation of the floral environment for food. Further, the Comanches made little or no use of fish and of such small game as rabbits (Lowie 1954:6).

The Basin Shoshone practice of infanticide disappeared as the family group
175 could more efficiently care for its offspring. The practice of enculturating slaves
178 and captives became common among the Comanches in order to augment their
[847] numbers and specifically to free males for hunting and warfare. The stress on
[727] war and hunting also tended to debase the position of women, and such practices
562 as the mutilation of wives, a custom which had never occurred in Basin Shoshone
593 culture, came into practice.
[304]

Patterns of religious belief and behavior also underwent certain changes
175 from Basin life to the Plains. A vaguely defined belief in a Great Spirit persisted,
178 as did the relative lack of concern with the afterlife. However, the intense fear of
771 ghosts held by the Basin Shoshone diminished in the Comanche Plains culture.
[776] Also, the practice of power transmission from individual to individual, instead
715 of power source to individual, developed in importance. The decrease in ghost
[776] fear and, it is assumed, witchcraft in Comanche culture, as opposed to the Basin
794 culture, was greatly facilitated by the lessening of intrasocial tensions and the
578 Comanches' ability, through warfare, to turn aggressions outward and away from
[721] the primary group. As a whole, Comanche religious patterns were exceedingly
796 simple and lacking in elaborate ceremonialism and ritual, at least compared to their Plains neighbors (Hoebel 1940:83).

The Comanches possessed characteristics, other than their paucity of
175 ceremonialism, which served to differentiate them from other Plains tribes. The
171 Comanche bands were more self-managing than bands found among other Plains
621 groups. Warrior societies, a diagnostic trait of Plains culture, were lacking in
575 Comanche society except in the most rudimentary form. The Sun Dance was not
796 a vital aspect of Comanche culture. Decoration of clothing with beads, quills,
291 and ornaments of bone, shell, and metal was deemphasized, while heavy fringing
[342] of the garments was the rule. The Comanche tepee was built on a four-pole base like that of the Blackfoot, Sarsi, Ute, and Shoshone, while the Comanches' historic neighbors, such as the Kiowa, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Kiowa-Apache used a three-pole foundation (Lowie 1954:33).

By the early nineteenth century the bison herds were greatly diminished
72 on the south Plains, and the Comanches increasingly turned to raiding to augment
[224] their economy. During this period the Comanches raided New Mexico, the Santa Fe Trail, northern Texas, and Old Mexico, sometimes as far south as Durango.

31: Jones E-5 (1967-1970) 1972 NO6 Comanche NO6
Oklahoma

115 malevolent spirits of the dead and the Medicine of the potential eagle doctor.
159 Kardiner's (1945:93) observation that, among the Comanche, "Medicine" is
756 merely a euphemism for "courage" is pertinent, for the ghost's major weapon
775 against the neophyte doctor is fear. It is interesting that although the behavior
[171] engaged in during these four days and nights of solitude is similar to the general pattern of Plains vision questing, Sanapia conceives of this time as merely a final test and not a time when a supernatural patron could have possibly appeared
[825] to her and granted her certain supernatural prerogatives. The apparition of her
[787] patron, the eagle, would come later in her career as a doctor. In the beginning of
[778] her doctoring career, the powers which she possessed came strictly from a personal power transmission from her mother and uncle to her. Sanapia feels that visitations from either the eagle, or at times from the spirits of her mother and uncle, are gifts granted her as a reward for her faith and conscientious endeavors as a doctor.

Power Transmission

115 The first stage in the actual power transmission from the mother was
159 concerned with instilling power into Sanapia's mouth and hands, the areas of
756 the body where an eagle doctor's powers are most strongly represented. The rituals
[826] involved with this first phase of transmission are very similar to the blessing ceremony, at least in the introductory stages. Sanapia's brother was told by the mother to lay a fire of pecan wood. After the wood burned to coals, the brother
[823] brought the coals to a secluded place where Sanapia and her mother waited. The mother sat facing east, and Sanapia was instructed to sit facing her, while the mound of coals burned between them. Sanapia was cedared[1] and fanned by her
[533] mother with the standard blessings of long life and good health. This blessing also included the mother's singing of her Medicine song, an action which serves
115 to call the *puhakut*'s power sources to his service. The mother, using her bare
159 hand, then plucked a live coal from the mound of embers and handed it to Sanapia.
756 At first, Sanapia reports, she balked at placing the burning coal in her hand, but at
789 her mother's insistence she took it and was amazed that it did not burn her. She was then instructed to rub the coal over her hands. Once again the similarity in the concepts of "Medicine" and "courage" appear. Today, Sanapia interprets the handling of live coals as an act of faith in the doctor, a necessary first step in testing the potential doctor's resolve.

> I was sure scared then . . . almost got up and ran away. I was only a young girl at that time, you know. But, when I took them coals on my hand, inside and outside my hand I felt a chill, maybe. Oh, it was like chills in my hands. That has the meaning that power was in there . . . working in my hands. Felt like it would go up my arm even.

[1] The dried leaves of the red cedar are sprinkled on live coals, and the rising smoke is wafted over the person who is being blessed.

31: Jones E-5 (1967-1970) 1972 N06 Comanche N06
Oklahoma

After Sanapia had taken the coal and covered her hands with the ashes, her mother began the transmission of supernatural power to Sanapia's mouth. Two eagle feathers, manipulated by the mother, were drawn across Sanapia's opened mouth four times; however, in the course of the fourth movement of the feathers, one of the feathers disappeared. At this occurrence Sanapia's mother told her that the eagle feather had entered her mouth and would dwell there for the rest of her life. 115 159 756 789

As with a similar phenomenon occurring in a variety of witchcraft which will be discussed in Chapter 5, Sanapia states that she does not believe that an eagle feather actually was inserted into her mouth but rather that the idea, the essence, or the Medicine which the eagle feather symbolized, was the entity which was placed in her mouth. She does not attempt to explain the disappearance of the second feather from her mother's hand except to suggest that her mother possessed certain powers which she did not transmit to Sanapia. This first phase was ended with the mother's application of red paint to Sanapia's face, forearms, and legs, from the knees to, and including, the soles of the feet.

Two tabus, or "rules" as Sanapia calls them, were attached by the mother to the powers transmitted in this first phase of the actual transmission. Sanapia was forbidden to eat any kind of fowl. Her mother warned that if she broke that rule, the feather in her throat would kill her. The second tabu forbade Sanapia to allow people to pass behind her carrying food, especially meat, while she is eating. 115 159 756 784 262 264

> That eagle, when he eats, he don't like anybody to be behind him. When its sitting on the ground, and it see anybody behind him, it twist all around and sit toward you. If he back there eating meat, he don't want any meat behind him. If some kid carry meat on a plate, it just give me chills all at once . . . you know, if they be behind me. I don't care if I don't see it, if there's meat on that plate behind me I get chills, and I know someone back there. My mother said, "If you keep it like that and try to take care of yourself, it won't make you loose your ways about it. That's going to be the rule I give you. You got to do that. Don't let anybody go behind you when you eat, especially if they carrying meat."

It is impossible to say if certain kinds of power or specific supernatural abilities to achieve a certain exclusive end were transmitted at each of the four stages of transmission. From Sanapia's discussion it can be said that each stage marked an increase in the degree of power generally. Before the beginning of the actual power transmission Sanapia was taught the ritual procedure which she would require as a doctor. The four stages of transmission acted to instill in her ever-increasing powers to successfully actualize the goals of these doctoring procedures. 115 159 756

An analogy can be made with the construction of an automobile. Before it is actually energized, it is equipped with everything that it will require to efficiently operate. Then, at the source of manufacture, it is carefully observed while given several rigidly controlled and graded performance tests. Supernatural power, like an untested automobile, is potentially dangerous to the operator. This appears to

31: Jones E-5 (1967-1970) 1972 NO6 Comanche NO6
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115 159 756 be the rationale for the transmission of power in stages, each stage being interrupted by a certain length of time in which the effects of the preceding stage on the recipient can be observed. Sanapia was not entirely sure how a negative reaction to a transmission of supernatural power would manifest itself. She suggested death or insanity as two possibilities.

For the several months following the first stage of transmission, Sanapia was closely observed by her mother and her maternal uncle, who at this time entered into Sanapia's training program, instructing her in the many medicinal uses of peyote. If any ill effects from the first transmission had occurred in Sanapia, her mother would have immediately terminated Sanapia's program and acted to remove the power which she had given her up to that point. Sanapia's total immersion in running water would have been a core theme of such a desacralizing ritual. Since no negative reactions appeared in Sanapia, her mother initiated the second stage of transmission.

All the power transmission ceremonies are generally similar in that they are based on the blessing ceremony of the eagle doctor, which employs cedar, eagle feathers, Medicine song, and red paint. The unique feature of the second [789] [825] transmission was the mother's magical insertion of an "eagle egg" into Sanapia's stomach. An increase in eagle traits indicates an increase in eagle power. To Sanapia the logical pivot of the egg insertion in this second stage of transmission is clear: "Female eagles have eggs inside them." As with the case of the eagle feather in the first transmission ceremony, Sanapia feels that it was the essence or the idea of the egg which entered her. Similarly, she cannot explain how the egg disappeared from her mother's hand prior to the egg's insertion in her stomach.

Tabus

115 159 756 789 262 The tabu connected with this second power increase forbids Sanapia to eat eggs. It can be seen that each stage of power increase is signaled by the neophyte eagle doctor's acquisition of symbolic elements which are to a great degree intertwined with the nature of the accompanying tabus. As the power increases, the potential dangers to the *puhakut* increase as his behavior is more tightly bound by tabus, the breaking of which would lead to personal disaster. From Sanapia's accounts, *the puhakuts*, at least of her time, possessed a way to escape the tabu burdens of their powers if they wished. As Sanapia grew older, she began to acquire a craving for eggs. In order to satisfy this hunger, without risking the dangers of breaking her "rule," she commissioned an eagle doctor to extract the egg from her, and thus dismiss the tabu against the consumption of eggs. Of course, by having this done she also lost the quantity of supernatural power which accompanies the eagle egg. It is interesting to note that though the tabu was removed, Sanapia is now physically unable to eat eggs.

> Up to today, I just can't eat eggs. When I eat it I feel like it just set there and it won't go in. I don't know why. I thought I would be able to eat eggs. When I was small my mother won't let me eat eggs because I already had one and she don't want me to eat eggs. But after she pass away and I start eating

31: Jones E-5 (1967-1970) 1972 NO6 Comanche NO6
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elaborate on this statement, only suggesting that she works to make her patient believe in her since he will not regain his health if he does not have faith in her powers. Some of Sanapia's expatients have noted her ability to make things appear and disappear; however, as mentioned previously, Sanapia will deny that she does sleight of hand.

Sanapia is aware that her shamanistic performance is expected by her patients and that it is a necessary element in strengthening their faith in her. However, she states that she could marshal her powers for healing without the performance, though the patient would not be highly impressed. Sanapia must move the patient to an emotional acceptance of her powers, for she feels that without the patient's confirmed faith her powers can do nothing toward curing him. Sanapia's belief that the patient's attitude toward the doctor is of significant importance in determining the outcome of the treatment is based in a sound grasp of psychotherapeutic principle, though in her case it is couched in the mystique of the faith healer.

Number of Patients per Year

How many patients does Sanapia doctor each year? This would be a difficult question to answer exactly. Sanapia does not think in these terms. Further she does not consider it "proper" to discuss the question. I would estimate, however, that she doctors approximately six cases of ghost sickness per year, and she may treat twenty patients suffering from more standard ailments during the same time. These estimates are based on clues collected during several years of interviewing and on observations of the contents of her medicine kit. I observed her medicine kit in the early fall when her medicines were almost totally depleted and watched as she collected what she felt would be a sufficient quantity of medicines to last until the next collecting season the following fall. From a knowledge of the possible combinations and quantities of dosages of these medicines, I estimated how many patients could be treated before the medicine supply would be depleted. This estimate corresponded closely with the estimates based on interview material.

What Is Ghost Sickness?

This is an important question. The key to understanding Sanapia's vital function in twentieth-century Comanche society rests with the answer. Ghost sickness may be an entirely organic or static affliction, perhaps a variety of organically motivated transient paralysis. Then again, a viewpoint suggesting the psychogenic nature of ghost sickness presented itself when Sanapia's accounts of ghost sickness victims were perused, particularly noting the age and sex of the victim. In the majority of cases, the victim was male, twenty-five to forty years of age. Also, based on interviews with ghost-sickness victims and information gathered from Comanche informants, it was discovered that these individuals were all very similar personalities.

168 traditional Comanche culture fundamentally changed, owing to the extermination of the buffalo—their staff of life—their pacification by the U.S. Army, and their confinement to a reservation in present-day Oklahoma.

Berlandier was not the first white man to collect artifacts from the Comanche and their neighbors. As early as 1779 Governor Juan Bautista de Anza of New Mexico presented to Teodoro de Croix, Military Commander of the Internal Provinces of New Spain, the war headdresses taken from the bodies of the prominent Comanche war chief, Cuerna Verde (Green Horn), and his second in command, Jumping Eagle, after a battle on September 3, 1779, during which the Spanish decisively defeated Cuerna Verde's Comanche.[2] During the fall of 1807 Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike, pioneer American explorer of the Southern Plains, sent Thomas Jefferson an Apache quiver and arrows and informed the President that he had "collected a variety of curiosities of various savage tribes through which we passed."[3] Unfortunately, I have found no record of the preservation of these earlier artifacts in public or private collections.

The very great majority of Comanche specimens in the museums of this country and abroad were collected within the Reservation Period—i.e. after 1875. The earlier objects in the Berlandier collection provide a solid base for future studies of trends and developments in the history of Comanche Indian arts and crafts. Even though they number less than 20 specimens, the ones Berlandier collected range from war equipment to costume and containers; they illustrate Comanche skills in featherwork, in dressing animal hides, and in decorating tough rawhide and soft skin surfaces with painted designs and trade beads during the second quarter of the 19th century. And they show the use at that time of trade cloth, rolled metal cones, and brass tacks in decorating articles of Indian make.

Comanche Shields Figures 19-23 Plate 17

The Berlandier collection contains three fine examples of the principle defensive weapon of the Comanche—the rawhide shield—commonly made from the breast of the buffalo, where the hide was thickest. Each shield was furnished with a cover of soft skin which enclosed and protected it when not in use.

In his written description of shields Berlandier makes repeated mention of the Comanche custom of tieing small animal skins to the fronts of the shields as war medicines.[4] The shield pictured in Figure 19 still has fragments of two pocket gophers (of the family Geomyinae) tied to it. Appar-

2. Thomas, 1932, pp. 134-36, 142.

3. Jackson, 1966, vol. 2, pp. 275-76. The quiver and arrows probably were from the Lipan Apache. Two of the arrows were deposited in Peale's Museum in Philadelphia and were entered in their Accession Book under the date May 4, 1808. (Accession Book, Peale's Museum, Dec. 4, 1804-October 1842, in Historical Society of Pennsylvania Library, Philadelphia.) These arrows were also mentioned in the Philadelphia *Aurora*, July 27, 1808.

4. See pages 54, 91, 116.

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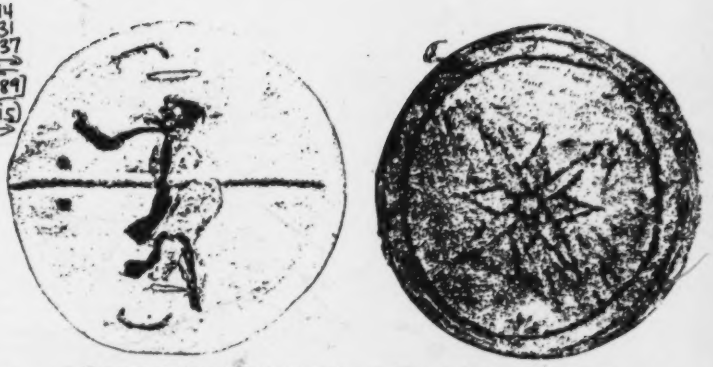

FIGURES 19–20. Comanche shield, with medicines attached, and painted cover. (USNM 4432.)

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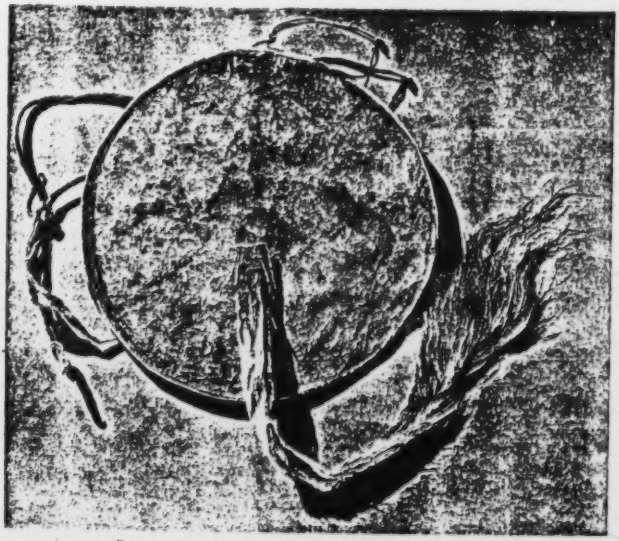

FIGURE 21. Comanche painted shield cover. (Field Museum 60,579.)

[p. 170]

 tremities. The arms are bent at the elbows and end in three-fingered hands. The straight legs are turned up at their extremities to form feet.

In its rudimentary simplicity the style of human figure represented by this Comanche artist resembles some of the human figures pictured on exposed rock surfaces and in caves of Texas as recorded by archeologists. A. T. Jackson has expressed the opinion that "a few of the historic paintings in West-Central Texas, and perhaps elsewhere, may have been made by the Comanches."[6] The styles of human and animal figures appearing on these three shields are essentially as primitive as are the paintings on rock surfaces and evidence no influence from the white man's artistic traditions.

Black and yellow are the colors most prominently used in these shield paintings. In 1837 Noah Smithwick observed that the Comanche regarded a yellow substance, resembling ochre, as having "power to turn aside any missile which might be directed against a body on which it had been rubbed."[7] The shield paintings were essentially protective designs.

Comanche Quivers Figures 24–25

Two Comanche quivers in the Berlandier collection are pictured in Figures 24 and 25. The first (Figure 24) is of horsehide, 69 cm. long, and decorated with a cut fringe at the back, as well as at the ends of the 5.5 cm. wide rawhide shoulder strap. The second quiver is longer (75 cm.), of horse or deerhide, with a rear extension of buffalo hide, hair inside, about 9 cm. in length. Its rawhide shoulder sling is but 3 cm. wide. Each quiver is fitted with bent wooden spacers which prevent the case from twisting or bending out of shape. Unlike the Comanche specimen illustrated by Bollaert (Figure 18, top center), these quivers are not combined with bow cases. Nor are they made of white wolf hide, which Berlandier learned the Comanche preferred for protecting their weapons because of the strong supernatual powers they attributed to the white wolf.[8]

Comanche Powder Horn Figure 26

Powder horns pictured by Lino Sánchez y Tapia as carried by Lipan, Comanche, Tonkawa, Tawehash, Kickapoo, Koasati, and Karankawa Indians are a dark color, suggesting that they were of buffalo horn.[9] A Comanche powder horn from the Berlandier collection (Figure 26), however, is of domesticated cattle, large numbers of which had reverted to the wild state in Texas before the 1830s. This piece measures 8 cm. in diameter at the base and 2 cm. at the tip. A wooden plug, painted red, has been inserted in the base. Presumably a smaller wooden plug was placed in the tip end to prevent powder from falling out. The horn is decorated

6. Jackson, 1938, p. 463. The same source illustrates a wide variety of conventionalized human figures occurring in pictographs at Texas sites (plates CCLII–CCLXIX), as well as the representation of a buffalo horn headdress painted on the shield of Comanche Jack, which was used by him in raids into Texas prior to 1880 (plate CCXLIII).

7. Smithwick, 1900, p. 191.

8. Berlandier, 1841, p. 180.

9. See Plates 1–6, 11, 14, and 15.